The Impact of Managers' Emotional Intelligence on Dealing with Difficult Situations in the Hospitality Sector in Ireland.

By:

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Abstract

Emotional Intelligence skills are pivotal for managers to be successful in their roles, more importantly if their jobs involve dealing with customers, employees, and difficult situations daily. In the Irish hospitality sector, most companies do not pay particular attention to this skillset when hiring a new manager. This results in high turnover rates across the industry and bad reputation for some businesses that overlook these competencies in managers.

This research project seeks to explore the benefits of Emotional Intelligence in the hospitality sector, how Emotional Intelligence affects the way managers address conflict and how relationships with subordinates could enhance if Emotional Intelligence levels were to rise, affecting managers' performance positively and, organisational performance in overall.

This study applies a qualitative research design for the data collection, conducting semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions to get accurate and relevant information from the participants in the research. The sample group is formed of 10 managers working in the hospitality sector. A thematic analysis is executed to interpret the answers of the participants.

The findings from the data analysis show that the managers have improved their Emotional Intelligence levels by learning on the job, but they still feel they do not have the necessary tools to manage some difficult situations with their employees. This produces a psychological impact as they are not ready to cope with some of the daily challenges they encounter.

This research concludes that Emotional Intelligence is crucial for managers to be successful in the hospitality sector, and some training or psychological help would be necessary in order to assist the managers on taking better decisions when dealing with difficult situations. Furthermore, the culture of organisations needs to promote Emotional Intelligence from the top to create a healthy environment.

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Emotional intelligence is a term that, even highly recognized by Human Resources, has not been totally implemented in some sectors of the economy since it first appeared in the 90s. Companies are emotional places (Armstrong, 2000) where individuals interact with one another. Salovey and Mayer (1990) described Emotional Intelligence as the "ability to understand and manage individuals" (Makkar and Basu, 2018), while Setiyowati and Razak (2018) defined Emotional Intelligence as the "ability to read and navigate many social situations and conflicts".

In the hospitality sector, Emotional Intelligence has not been incorporated into the skillset needed to become a manager. Management research has established that Emotional Intelligence is an essential contributor to business growth. Therefore, organisations should have staff trained in technical and emotional skills (Drigas and Papoutsi, 2019). However, there is an overall lack of research regarding the need of Emotional intelligence in the hospitality sector and about the impact of managers' Emotional Intelligence leading their teams and dealing with difficult situations, and how this can affect their performance and, in overall, the organisational performance.

This research aims to explore the benefits of Emotional Intelligence in conflict management, to identify the ways Emotional Intelligence can enhance relationships between managers and employees, to determine how it can improve managers' performance, and to determine the consequences of lack of Emotional Intelligence in managers.

This chapter will provide an introduction to the study by first discussing the research problem, aims and objectives, the relevance of the research and, to conclude, the limitations of the study.

1.2. Research Problem

Numerous authors have researched the need of Emotional Intelligence in the workplace (Goleman and Cherniss, 2001; Makkar and Basu, 2018; Cui, 2021). Emotional Intelligence is critically important to enhance relationships between employers and employees and the organisational performance in the hospitality sector (Seeler, 2019;

Langhorn, 2004) and to provide employee satisfaction (Savić and Obradović, 2020; Sy et al., 2019).

However, these studies have conventionally focused on quantitative studies measuring different variables, the Emotional Intelligence levels between employees among them. This body of research concentrates on the managers' insights and experiences in the hospitality sector regarding Emotional Intelligence. How Emotional Intelligence affects the way managers address conflict and in which ways relationships with subordinates could be improved by increasing levels of Emotional Intelligence, affecting managers' performance positively and, therefore, organisational performance.

As a result, the existing research is inadequate for the hospitality sector because they are missing the insights of the most important piece of companies to have a positive organisational performance, the leaders, that can constructively influence their teams. They can achieve this aim by using Emotional Intelligence competencies to enhance their relationships and their performance, and to handle conflict in a more meaningful way.

1.3. Research Question and Objectives

The aim of this research is to contribute meaningful insights towards the impact of managers' Emotional Intelligence on dealing with difficult situations in the hospitality sector in Ireland.

To answer the research question, the below objectives have been identified:

1. To explore the benefits of Emotional Intelligence in conflict management.
2. To determine in which ways Emotional Intelligence improves relationships between employees and managers.
3. To identify in which ways Emotional Intelligence can improve managers' performance.
4. To determine the consequences of lack of Emotional Intelligence in managers.

1.4. The Significance of the Study and Limitations

This study will contribute to the body of knowledge on Emotional Intelligence by evaluating the experiences and opinions provided by managers in the hospitality sector. This will help address the ongoing shortage of research in this area and deliver a realistic value to organisations functioning in that sector.

There are some possible limitations of the study under discussion. The first one is that the results of this study may not be generalisable to build theory because due to time constraints, the sample size is relatively small. And the second possible limitation is that the qualitative research is very time consuming so there may not be enough time to analyse all the data collected accurately.

1.5. Chapter Outline

This section delineates the presentation of the different chapters throughout the dissertation while offering an overview of the content sustained in each chapter.

1.5.1 Introduction Chapter

The first section displays an overview of this dissertation. The features of this study are exposed, including the identification of the research questions and objectives and explanation of the research justification.

1.5.2 Literature Review Chapter

This chapter describes and examines existing literature that relates to the research topic. Various sources will be analysed.

1.5.3 Methodology Chapter

The third chapter describes the research method and approach selected for the research to answer the research question and the research objectives. It also provides a justification for the chosen data collection method, sampling strategy, ethical considerations, and limitations related to this study.

1.5.4 Findings Chapter

This chapter presents and describes the findings from the primary research that was conducted through semi-structured interviews. The analysis of the findings was completed through a thematic analysis.

1.5.5 Discussion Chapter

The fifth chapter analyses the relevance of the findings obtained from the primary research within the context of the literature review. This section also discusses some implications, limitations of the study and recommendations for future research.

1.5.6 Conclusion Chapter

The final chapter gathers all the information that has been presented and provides a final conclusion of the topic discussed. Recommendations for the industry will be identified. CIPD requirements are included.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the existing literature associated with the research question: The impact of managers' emotional intelligence on dealing with difficult situations in the hospitality sector. This chapter will define the term of Emotional Intelligence and its components, followed by a brief explanation of the concepts of leadership and conflict management and the connection they have with Emotional Intelligence, followed by the leadership styles and conflict management styles. To conclude, this section will evaluate the need for Emotional Intelligence in the hospitality sector in Ireland.

2.2 Definition and background of Emotional Intelligence

The roots of Emotional Intelligence go back to quite a several years ago. Edward Thorndike (1920), professor of Educational Psychology, argued that "Social Intelligence" is one of the different types of existing intelligences, and presented the term as the ability to comprehend and lead men and women, boys and girls and behave wisely in human relationships. In 1935, Edgar Doll was the first academic seeking to measure Social Intelligence in young people (Chirania and Dhal, 2018). Authors like Robert Thorndike and Saul Stern (1937) revised the previous efforts to assess Social Intelligence and concluded that there was more need for research in the competence of managing and understanding people. In 1983, Howard Gardner created his model of multiple intelligence that differentiated two types of personal intelligence, interpersonal and intrapersonal (Cherniss and Goleman, 2001).

Later studies, such as Reuven Bar-On in 1988, contributed majorly to the research and was the first psychologist to introduce the idea of Emotional quotient (EQ) relating it to well-being, and in 1997 created the EQ test to assess emotional and social competence.

Eventually, in 1990, Peter Salovey and John Mayer introduced the concept of Emotional Intelligence for the first time and formulated their model of Emotional Intelligence releasing an article with the same name where they focused on cognitive aspects and divided the abilities into four domains: Self-awareness, Self-management, Social management and Relationship management (Cherniss and Goleman, 2001).

They described Emotional Intelligence as the skill to control one's own and others' feelings, to be able to identify different emotions and classify them properly, and last, to apply emotional information in order to manage thoughts and behaviours. It became more important when explained by Daniel Goleman (1995), that developed the five components of Emotional Intelligence: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills.

It was by the same author (Goleman, 1998a), that the concept was related to the effectiveness of leaders and managers. From that time, it has been linked to the business world with the idea that the higher Emotional Intelligence levels a person possesses, the more probabilities has to become a better leader (Goleman, 1998b).

Bar-On et al. (2007) argued that Emotional and Social intelligence together means for the individuals "to have the ability to understand and express themselves, understand and establish good relationships with others, and successfully cope with the needs of daily life" (Çetin and Karakaş, 2021). The term Emotional Intelligence is also outlined as a display of non-cognitive competencies, abilities, and skills that affect one's capacity to succeed in dealing with surrounding demands and pressures. (Bar-On et al., 2007; Narayanamoorthi and Merlinsasikala, 2021)

2.2.1 Components of Emotional Intelligence

There are several mixed models of competencies of Emotional Intelligence, but this research will focus on the one proposed by Daniel Goleman (1995) considering it is more detailed and more suitable for this study. He defined Emotional Intelligence and his five-domain model as the skill to identify one's emotions (self-awareness), handle one's emotions (self-regulation), stimulate oneself (motivation), recognise other's emotions (empathy), and manage relationships with others (social skills). In 1998, he argued that Emotional Intelligence can be divided into two categories of competencies. The first is personal competency and includes Self-Awareness, Self-Regulation, and Self-Motivation. The second modality is social competency and comprises Social Awareness (Empathy) and Social skills (Goleman, 1998a).

Self-Awareness

Self-awareness is the capacity to identify, comprehend and monitor one's own emotions; utilising them to conduct one's own attitudes and being aware of one's strengths and

weaknesses. Leaders who understand their own emotions and reactions are more likely to avoid problems of miscommunication with their subordinates because they can manage their own emotions (Dess and Picken, 2000).

Self-Management

Self-management can be defined as the ability to handle and adjust one's own emotions appropriately, depending on the situation. Langhorn (2004) argued that when a manager has high levels of Emotional Intelligence, their employees tend to have higher levels of job satisfaction because as they are capable to control the impressions they provide to others, they can lead their employees to act in a certain way to accomplish the goals of the organisation (Dashborough and Ashkanasy, 2002).

Self-Motivation

Motivation helps individuals to control their emotions to guide them towards achieving their goals (Cherniss and Goleman, 2001). This ability facilitates the person to take the initiative, enjoy the learning process, and overcome obstacles and setbacks.

Social Awareness

Social awareness is the competency to empathise with the people that are around, understanding their point of view that comes from a unique background, and being able to identify others' needs and emotions. Successful leaders tend to read and understand their employees' feelings, resulting in good relationships with one another (Kellett et al., 2002).

Social Skills

Once all the previous domains are mastered, there is the fifth domain that can be said to be the most important for a leader and it is social skills. It is the ability to handle or manage relationships with others, and to influence and inspire emotions in others. This category is divided into subgroups: developing and training others, leadership, persuasion or influence, communication, conflict management, collaboration and teamwork, change catalyst, and building connections (Boyatzis and Goleman, 1999). Managers with excellent relationship management are good at creating a positive workplace environment by inspiring and stimulating others, and making feel employees valued, giving them a sense of contribution to the company (Leban and Zulauf, 2004).

2.2.2 The Importance of Emotional Intelligence in the Workplace

There is no doubt that Emotional Intelligence is essential in all aspects of life, but it is especially important when it comes to the workplace (Cherniss and Goleman, 2001).

It promotes a healthier environment with better relationships because people with more Emotional Intelligence have the ability to empathise with other people's emotions (Jain, 2018). People with high levels of Emotional Intelligence can motivate themselves better. They have the ability to self-regulate themselves more developed and are able to control their impulses, which results in a lower propensity to procrastination, which makes them better to focus on achieving long-term goals (Jain, 2018), therefore, co-workers with high levels of emotional intelligence are better motivating themselves and the teams to perform better in the daily tasks assigned to them.

People with more Emotional Intelligence have more capacity to adapt to changes and consequently, not to get frustrated so easily when they are faced with difficulties and obstacles. Moreover, they are likely to be more creative and encourage an environment where the exchange of ideas is always welcome, and this will foster a climate of collaboration among the team members.

Employees that possess emotional skills are more likely to be satisfied in the workplace than those without emotional skills. As a result, it is linked directly with the retention of staff and job satisfaction (Glodstein, 2014).

Effective leadership is another advantage of Emotional Intelligence in the organisation. A person with a high degree of Emotional Intelligence is expected to be a team player, thus, an effective leader (Yadav and Lata, 2019). A good leader must recognise the subordinates' needs and deal properly with their emotions. If he is able to do that, he will deliver positivity into the atmosphere, allowing empathy and trust to arise. As a result, every employee will feel valued and will become more productive (Yadav and Lata, 2019).

2.3 Leadership and Emotional Intelligence

As mentioned above, Leadership is closely related to Emotional Intelligence, meaning that as higher levels of Emotional Intelligence a leader has, the more probabilities has to become a more effective leader (Goleman, 1998b).

Although there is no clear agreement on the definition of leadership among academics, it is a complex notion that has evolved over time and alters the meaning of the traditional concept of management (Raffo and Clark, 2018). Leadership can be defined as a "process of influence" aimed to accomplish the goals of certain organisations or groups (Shackleton, 1995; Hitt, et al., 2014). Furthermore, leadership is a "process of social interaction", where managers aim to enhance employees' performance by impacting their mindset (Humphrey, 2002), therefore, it is "the ability of an individual to influence, motivate, and enable others to contribute to the organisation's effectiveness and success" (Olley, 2021). It differs from the concept of management because leadership incorporates an element of voluntarism or free will to follow orders by the employee.

Management, with its practices and procedures, addresses complexity while leadership must cope with change (Kotter, 2001). The contemporary challenges leaders in organisations must face are globalisation, the ongoing progression of technology, maintaining corporate social responsibility standards, leading a diverse workforce because of demographical and cultural factors, and meeting customer needs by building competitive advantage among others (Hitt, et al., 2014). With the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, most companies have not been able to respond to the demands of the new circumstances and are struggling to persist (Biddle, 2020). Nevertheless, strong leadership is demonstrated in those who ensure that their teams stay safe, together, focused on their goals, and driven to give their best (Biddle, 2020). Hence, leaders also assist organisations in the way they survive the change.

Additionally, an outstanding leader needs to have a good balance of four skill requirements: cognitive, business, strategic, and last but not less important, interpersonal skills (Mumford et al., 2007). Apart from having a high Intelligent Quotient, people hired to perform an executive role need to have high levels of Emotional Intelligence, otherwise, they are not likely to be successful in their positions and will not continue with their jobs for long periods of time (Doe et al., 2015).

Leaders are critical for companies since they are in charge of the teams that need to achieve the goals of every organisation (Kotter, 2001). They must be qualified to understand their subordinates' needs for the organisation to perform well and be effective (Rodriguez and Walters, 2017). Besides this, a superb manager understands that every employee has different and unique qualities that make them special in the workplace (Buckingham, 2005). Effective leaders can increase engagement from their employees

when they have Emotional Intelligence because they are able to spread positivity into the workplace environment (Jafri et al., 2016).

There are several leadership styles, such as transactional leadership or transformational leadership, that will be considered in the next section. They have evolved because organisations have developed into flatter structures where independence and flexibility are appreciated by employees. Leaders have realised that it is better to empower employees through inspiration than to direct them through orders to action (Swan, 2017). Employees that have a sense of empowerment are more engaged and take responsibility for the tasks assigned to them, and as a result, they feel they are more valuable to the organisation (Scott-Halsell et al., 2008a).

2.3.2. Types of Leadership

A plethora of research exists examining leadership styles, and it previously focused on leaders' features to enhance leadership effectiveness and the situational factors on the leadership process (Burke and Collins, 2001). However, in 1990, there was a shift in the focus to leadership behaviours and two competing leadership styles appeared: transformational as opposed to transactional (Burke and Collins, 2001). There are many more, but the most common currently used are: Democratic, Autocratic, Laissez-faire, Transformational, Transactional, and Coaching.

The democratic style allows growth for the organisation as it is focused on the subordinates involving them in the decision-making process (Ferguson, 2011). Leaders in this style normally are supportive and innovative and tend to delegate tasks and use feedback as a measure to deal with and correct mistakes. The autocratic style is known because it is performed in a unidirectional way, leaders are authoritarian and results-focused. There is no delegation of decision, therefore, the leader takes all the decisions, and the subordinates follow the orders no questions asked (Fiaz et al., 2017).

In the laissez-faire or hands-off style, the leader delegates all the responsibilities to their subordinates because they know how to do the tasks assigned to do properly with no orders (Geh Ming et al., 2021). The leader only interferes if it is strictly necessary. This style has been identified as the least satisfactory and least successful management style (Bass and Bass, 2008). The coaching style is used to train and develop their subordinates

to reach their full potential, so they are able to contribute to the vision of the company (Peng et al., 2019).

The transformational style is focused on inspiring, empowering, and coaching the followers because the leader aspires to major organisational change (Murari and Mukherjee, 2021). In the transactional style, the leader makes an exchange of rewards, benefits, and sanctions to achieve optimal employee performance by their subordinates (Frangieh and Rusu, 2021).

As it can be seen, there are many leadership styles, every one of them with its pros and cons, and depending on the style used, leaders achieve different goals for the organization resulting in different outcomes.

2.4 Conflict Management and Emotional Intelligence

Conflict is part of human nature, and it exists whenever individuals, groups, organisations, or nations have discrepancies with one another. It can be defined as a disagreement or difference of opinions or objectives that engenders a negative effect for any party involved in the dispute (Jehn, 1997).

Companies are emotional places (Armstrong, 2000) where individuals interact with one another. Managers and employees need to actively collaborate in order to positively motivate others and achieve the goals of the organisation. (Goleman and Cherniss, 2001). Sometimes conflicts are shaped by the reactions of supervisors and managers that are biased by the external environment (Avgar, 2020). For this reason, when these disputes arise, managers require the skills necessary to deal with conflict effectively.

Emotions inherently emerge when there is a conflict in an organisation (Bodtker and Jameson, 2001) and it has negative connotations for individuals and groups, such as tension, overwhelm, frustration, fatigue, resentment, and can lower productivity and motivation in employees (Jehn, 1997). Disagreement in the workplace can drop performance by disturbing employees and undermining personal relationships. Thus, it is indispensable to handle it appropriately to get successful outcomes.

Research on conflict management is yet scarce (Winardi, et al., 2020). First, academics focused on the roots and sources and resolution of conflict. In the later 90s, research was conducted about workplace conflict, conflict management styles, geographic discrepancies in conflict management, and group conflict and work performance. From

the end of the 2000s to a few years ago, the investigation shifted to issues like gender, emotions, and mediation, and social conflict among others (Winardi, et al., 2020). The effect of emotions on conflict management is a subject that has been gaining some relevance in recent years, nonetheless, more research is needed to explore the connection between an individual's Emotional Intelligence and conflict management approaches (Montes et al., 2012; Winardi, et al., 2020).

The quality of relationships in the workplace has direct effects on the wellbeing of individuals. Negative conflict as harassment or bullying can damage individuals and weaken team working (CIPD, 2021). Conflict management alludes to the peculiar patterns that employees use when a dispute occurs (Moberg, 2001). Thus, conflict management is driven to increase organisational performance, create a long-term resolution to controversies, and avoid litigation in organisations (Nash and Hann, 2020).

Additionally, Emotional Intelligence has a positive impact on conflict management. Employees with higher levels of Emotional Intelligence have the skill to overcome conflicts in a more efficient way than people with lower levels (Goleman, 2000). This implies that there is a high relationship between Emotional Intelligence and good conflict management (Goleman, 2000). Leaders have a need to improve their competencies in Emotional Intelligence to ensure they deal with conflict efficiently and deliver a resolution of conflicts with sensitivity and diplomacy towards their employees. Some research, as Jordan and Troth (2004) and Moeller and Kwantes (2015) argues that the levels of Emotional intelligence can affect every individual's conflict management style.

There are different types of conflict, but the general classification used by researchers distinguishes between three categories: task conflict, process conflict, and relationship conflict (Hitt, et al., 2014). Task conflict appears when there is a difference of opinions in ideas and the group goals to achieve. Process conflict arises when there is a difference of opinions about the course of action to take in order to achieve the goals of the group. And last, relationship conflict occurs when there are interpersonal discrepancies among the group and deviate attention from tasks and ideas (Hitt, et al., 2014).

2.4.1 Conflict Management Styles

Organisational conflict can appear at all levels because every individual has different ideas, objectives, values, and recommendations about how to proceed in a certain situation or when there is a conflict of interests among them (Darling and Walker, 2001).

There are several theoretical models to address conflict management. For this research, the model used is Rahim (1983)'s five conflict management styles that employs two diverse dimensions "regard for self" and "regard for others". The five styles of conflict management are as follows: integrating, avoiding, dominating, accommodating, and compromising (Chen et al., 2019). The first feature "regard for self" evaluates the scope in which a person cares for their own interests (assertiveness), whereas the second category "regard for others" measures the levels to which a person exhibits interest for others (cooperative) (Rahim and Bonoma, 1979).

The integrating style displays strong interest for self along with others and it emphasises on collaboration to conflict resolution (Gross and Guerrero, 2001). It is based on assertiveness as well as cooperation. The avoiding pattern is not assertive nor cooperative because the individual thinks the solution of the conflict is not in their hands. It exhibits minimum regard for self and for others, which ends in unaddressed conflict because of evasiveness (Gross and Guerrero, 2001). The dominating style positions all the interest in self, therefore, the individual neglects the interest of the other party (Friedman et al., 2000). The accommodating pattern emphasises on concern for others only, which means that the person always meets the demands of others over their own (Friedman et al., 2000). And finally, the compromising style pursues to find a balance between the interests of self and others (Rahim, 1983).

As is well known, conflict and disputes are impossible to avoid in the place of work. The integrating, compromising, and accommodating styles are more assertive and cooperative, and show moderate to high levels of regard for others. Thus, avoiding and dominating are perceived as unhelpful or competitive, with a low interest in others' needs (Yu et al., 2006).

Emotional intelligence impacts the conflict management styles used by employees (Goleman, 1998a). Employees with higher levels of Emotional Intelligence tend to have collaborative styles to conflict resolution (Bhattacharya et al., 2016), establishing solutions that meet the demands of both parties (Schlaerth et al., 2013) However, individuals with lower levels of Emotional Intelligence usually are more avoidant and competitive, which has negative connotations to conflict management (Goleman, 1995).

2.5 Hospitality and Emotional Intelligence

For the purpose of this research, this study is going to take place in the Hospitality sector in Ireland, specifically, in bars and restaurants. The hospitality sector, as is well known, is a wide service industry, and it includes from bars and restaurants to travel and tourism, hotels, and recreation.

The primary aim of the hospitality sector is to generate benefits by providing a high level of customer service and fulfilling the expectations of customers (Scott-Halsell et al, 2008b). The second principal aim of hospitality ought to be to maintain their employees satisfied since they are in charge of having close contact with the customers. In other words, they can be seen as the face and ambassadors of businesses. Langhorn (2004) argued that the levels of Emotional Intelligence of employees in the hospitality sector are strongly associated with company performance. In such circumstances, managers need to work on their Emotional Intelligence competencies to strengthen their ability to deal with the daily problems that can arise in such a hectic environment.

The hospitality sector is customer-oriented, and customers have recently changed their expectations. The staff in restaurants is expected to be qualified to provide outstanding customer service and they are "trained to be service-oriented. However, service is subjective at best" (Scott-Halsell et al., 2008b). Customers need to feel appreciation and respect by the employees delivering the service (Kernbach and Schutte, 2005) considering that a disappointed or unhappy customer can seriously damage the image of restaurants and bars (Čolović et al., 2021). For that reason, the human capital in this sector is the key element employers need to pay attention to gain competitive advantage and react to the constantly changing circumstances in the economy. They need to meet the demands of two different groups with the purpose of being successful: the customers and the employees. (Connolly and McGing, 2006)

Managers must offer an excellent service, but they also need to ensure successful collaboration between their employees, that desire to feel valued and supported by their employers and managers (Čolović, et al., 2021). The ability to create a strong team that is going to perform to their best depends on the levels of their Emotional Intelligence (Savić and Obradović 2020). Emotional intelligence is an essential asset for companies in order to achieve competitive advantage in the hospitality industry (Seeler, 2019), and

it has been favourably connected to job satisfaction, employee performance (Sy et al., 2019), and retention of staff (Glodstein, 2014).

2.6 Conclusion of the Literature Review Chapter

Most of the research done before about Emotional Intelligence in hospitality is focused on measuring the levels of Emotional Intelligence among the employees, but there has been little research about the experiences of managers in hospitality concerning Emotional Intelligence and the ways they can improve their competencies in such regard to meanwhile, enhance relationships with subordinates and manage conflict in a more meaningful way.

A few organisations do a fantastic job taking care of their employees, but in plenty of companies, there is a disconnection between managers and employees that needs to be addressed in order to reduce the turnover rates and increase job satisfaction. By doing this, the employees are likely to stay longer in organisations and companies will save the cost of having to train new staff and they will strengthen their employer brand.

Most of the existing literature emphasises on the levels of Emotional Intelligence that the group samples possess when the research was done, but do not focus on the opinions and experiences lived by managers regarding this matter. To fill the gap in the literature, this research will undertake several semi-structured interviews with managers working in a specific restaurant to explore their insights into how they deal with conflict and how the use of Emotional Intelligence competencies could enhance relationships with subordinates and the overall organisational performance.

Chapter 3 – Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the research method chosen for this research to meet the research objectives and justify the decision of the approach undertaken. This section will discuss the research question and objectives, the research paradigm, research strategy, data collection method, and sampling strategy. In addition, it will consider the ethical considerations and limitations of the study.

3.2 Research Question and Objectives

The aim of this research is to contribute meaningful insights towards the impact of managers' emotional intelligence on dealing with difficult situations in the hospitality sector.

This investigation aims to answer how important Emotional Intelligence is for managers in the hospitality sector, how Emotional Intelligence affects the way managers address conflict, and in which ways relationships with subordinates could be improved by increasing levels of Emotional Intelligence affecting managers' performance in a positive way and therefore, organisational performance.

To answer the research question, the below objectives have been identified:

1. To explore the benefits of Emotional Intelligence in conflict management.
2. To determine in which ways Emotional Intelligence improves relationships between employees and managers.
3. To identify in which ways Emotional Intelligence can improve managers' performance.
4. To determine the consequences of lack of Emotional intelligence in managers.

3.3 Research Paradigm

Burrell and Morgan (1979) described the notion of paradigm as "meta-theoretical assumptions which underwrite the frame of reference, mode of theorising and modus operandi of the social theorists who operate within them". Therefore, paradigms are beliefs that reveal investigators' assumptions about reality and method (Guba and Lincoln 1989, 2005, cited in Mertens 2012) and it implies making a series of hypotheses based on the way the world is seen concerning science and society. These assumptions can be

classified as ontology (the nature of reality) and epistemology (the nature of knowledge) (Mertens and Wilson 2012, cited in Mertens 2012).

On the one hand, Crotty (1998) describes ontology as the study of being. Thereby, ontological hypotheses explain what represents reality for the investigator, deciding how things are and how things operate according to their understanding (Scotland, 2012). There are two approaches to research in the ontology domain: the objective and the subjective or constructivism (Holden and Lynch, 2004). The objective approach focuses on social phenomena and meanings that are separated from the data subjects, whereas in the subjective approach, the social phenomena and definitions are produced and consistently reformulated by social actors (Bryman, 2015).

On the other hand, Epistemology emphasises on the nature and types of knowledge (Cohen et al. 2007, cited in Scotland, 2012). It addresses how knowledge is developed, obtained, and transmitted (Scotland, 2012) and is divided into positivism and interpretivism (Taylor et al., 2015). Firstly, Rees (1980, cited in Lincoln and Guba, 1985) describes positivism as a "family of philosophies characterised by an extremely positive evaluation of science and the scientific method". In other words, positivism advocates that research must be value-free. Secondly, the interpretive method analyses the social life world from the cultural and historical backgrounds (Al-Ababneh, 2020). Thus, it perceives phenomena from an individual's point of view (Creswell 2009, cited in Scotland, 2012).

Within the context of this study, the researcher has chosen a subjective and interpretive approach. The justification for this decision is that the study is aimed to prove that Emotional Intelligence is crucial in hospitality to deal with conflict in a more meaningful way, and enhance relationships with subordinates while improving at the same time organisational performance by providing an excellent service. Since the research is focused on the insights of managers in hospitality regarding Emotional Intelligence, interaction is needed to understand what their insights are about the topic.

3.4 Research Strategy

The research strategy organises a plan of action about how to respond to the research question, specifying research objectives, indicating the source of data collection, and contemplating research limitations, among others (Al-Ababneh, 2020). According to Saunders et al. (2019), some of the most frequent research strategies used by researchers

are for example surveys, case studies, and in-dept interviews, and there is no particular research strategy better than other, but the decision on choosing one concrete research strategy must be founded on the research question, objectives and paradigm selected.

The first research strategy described as named above is surveys, identified as a positivistic methodology (Al-Ababneh, 2020). Surveys ensure the gathering of data where the researcher invites the person taking part to answer a group of questions about a specific phenomenon via the elaboration of questions that contemplate the points of view, beliefs, and behaviours of a group of individuals (Queirós et al., 2017). This research technique collects data faster, more accurately, efficiently, and at a lower cost (Zikmund, 2003).

Case studies are in-depth investigations of situations or methods for a long time (Scotland, 2012). This sort of research seeks to conduct an exhaustive analysis of the phenomenon or bounded entity under investigation, and it can be supported by quantitative or qualitative data. (Quinlan, 2011).

The third research strategy outlined above is in-depth interviews, and it is the approach chosen for the purpose of this study. The justification under this decision is that a research interview is a meaningful conversation happening between two or more people where the interviewer seeks to answer some brief and straightforward questions by active listening, creating a certain degree of rapport between the interviewer and the interviewee, and exploring topics of interests while clarifying meanings (Saunders et al., 2019) Interviewing the participants is a good approach to inquire about their personal experiences and therefore is a frequent method to learn about the phenomenon under examination (Arghode, 2012).

3.5 Research Methods

The research methods include three approaches to compile data, that are quantitative and qualitative, referred to using only one data-gathering technique; multi-methods, that blend more than one data collection approach (Tashakkori and Teddlie 2003, cited in Al-Ababneh, 2020) and mixed-method, which refer to the combination of quantitative and qualitative data collection approaches (Saunders et al. 2009, cited in Al-Ababneh, 2020).

The quantitative method pursues to find meticulous and reliable estimations that enable a numerical examination (Queirós et al., 2017). Quantitative research takes a scientific approach by investigating statistically and mathematically with the purpose of testing and

comparing theories to behaviour (Muijs, 2011). Hence, the quantitative approach attempts to produce knowledge by analysing things that can be quantified to some extent (Al-Ababneh, 2020).

The qualitative method aims to grasp a complex and ambiguous phenomenon and the definition of actions in a certain context (Queirós et al., 2017). The purpose of this phenomenological investigation is to reflect how people in a specific population encounter a particular situation, and how they handle the challenges that arise because of that situation that affects some aspects of their lives (Habib Alshamri, 2021). Therefore, this approach broadens the interpretation of why people and communities act in a certain way and the understanding of the meaning of things in the social world (Al-Ababneh, 2020).

Within the context of this investigation, the approach chosen by the researcher is a qualitative method since the focus of the study is to explore the importance of Emotional Intelligence in managers within the hospitality sector that affects conflict management, relationships with subordinates, and the overall performance of the organisation, as well as the managers' performance. The experiences lived by the managers in this sector are crucial to emphasise on the importance of this matter.

3.6 Data Collection Method

To answer the research question in any investigation, the analysis of some data is expected. This data can be secondary data, which is obtained initially with some other intention, but it can be used for the purpose of the specific research to offer different knowledge or new interpretations (Bulmer et al. 2009). The other type of data is primary data, and it is new information collected for the investigation. (Saunders et al., 2019). Thus, primary data alludes to research that entails the gathering of original data through research tools that are specific to a particular research topic (Malhorta, 2010)

Data collection is produced by several sources, such as surveys, semi-structured/unstructured interviews, and focus groups. (Axinn and Pearce, 2006). The first source of data collection has been explained above in the research strategy section and the information collected differs depending on the research objectives, and it is related to quantitative data and findings (Quinlan et al., 2019).

On the other hand, the focus group is a method used to research complex actions where the investigator has the opportunity to engage with the participants in the study. The data collected comes from a group during a debate (Acocella, 2012), and offers the researcher to monitor how people interact with one another by elaborating, articulating, supporting, and altering their opinions during a group discussion (Wilkinson, 1998).

For the purpose of this research, the data collection method chosen is semi-structured interviews because the focus is solely placed on the interviewee, and it invites to be a confidential and honest communication where the interviewee has room and time to formulate in detail their point of view or testimony of the phenomenon object of research (Quinlan et al., 2019).

3.7 Sampling Strategy

Field (2009) describes a sample as a reduced but representative gathering of units from a community employed to establish truths regarding that population. The target population must be linked to the population outlined in the research question (Quinlan et al., 2019). In the qualitative method, the main priority is not to collect a statistically representative part of the population worthwhile, but to obtain a valuable representative part of a population that includes individuals with diverse experiences and points of view to reflect an entire variety of the available information (Creswell and Creswell, 2018).

Researchers necessitate selecting between a probability or non-probability sample (Quinlan et al., 2019). The probability sample refers to a random sampling and is normally used in survey statistics (Yang et al., 2020). Non-probability sample or purposeful sampling, on the other hand, can offer an in-depth comprehension and insight about the subject of the study and research question (Patten, 2009)

Within the context of this dissertation, the target population is managers in hospitality, particularly those belonging to restaurants. The researcher has chosen purposeful sampling by conducting recorded semi-structured interviews about the topic chosen in the research question. The sample size is formed of 10 current managers or previous managers in the company selected (Bunsen Burgers), with different levels of Emotional Intelligence. To gain a broader perspective about Emotional Intelligence and enrich the results of the investigation, the researcher has invited participants with different backgrounds, different years of experience, and different group ages to take part.

Interviewee	Job position	Work experience
Participant 1	General manager FOH	5 years.
Participant 2	Manager BOH	4.5 years.
Participant 3	Manager BOH	1.7 years.
Participant 4	Manager FOH	2 years.
Participant 5	Manager BOH	3 years.
Participant 6	Manager FOH	8 months.
Participant 7	General manager BOH	5 years.
Participant 8	Manager BOH	1.5 years.
Participant 9	Manager FOH	2.5 years
Participant 10	Manager FOH	5 years.

*FOH (Front of the house); BOH (Back of the house)

The first approach with the participants was via email, after getting consent from the company (Bunsen Burgers), to conduct the investigation, the consent form can be provided under request. They were emailed with all the information about the research and the consent form (**Appendix 1**). After the explanation about why they were selected, they agreed to participate in the investigation, and they established date at their best convenience to conduct the interviews. They were done online due to Covid-19 restrictions.

3.8 Data Analysis Method

After the data collection stage, the next step in the process is the analysis of the data. This stage is critical for the study to ensure the accuracy of the results. Qualitative data analysis is the procedure via qualitative data are evaluated, and its main objective is to formulate a detailed and complete narrative of the phenomenon under discussion (Quinlan et al. 2019).

Within the context of this research, the approach chosen by the investigator is the thematic analysis, and the reason under this decision is that the thematic analysis provides a methodical but flexible approach to evaluate the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The research must code the data collected related to the research question in order to establish themes or patterns for further investigation (Saunders et al., 2019). Therefore, "the objective of thematic analysis is seeking recurrent patterns that can help understand a class of phenomena or events" (Robinson, 2021)

3.9 Reliability and Validity

Before and during the process of data gathering, the investigator must contemplate the validity and reliability of the data collected (Zohrabi, 2013). Validity is related to the idea of proving if the research done is credible and it assesses whether the evaluation of the investigation supports what it is supposed to evaluate (Zohrabi, 2013). Reliability responds to the consistency, trustworthiness, and replicability of the outcomes procured from a piece of investigation (Nunan, 1999). Legitimacy is one of the most crucial factors in qualitative research since it underpins the accuracy of the information collected (Creswell and Creswell, 2018).

The utilisation of a semi-structured interview record supports the consistency of the study, using open-ended questions to fulfill the standards of the qualitative studies. To guarantee the reliability and validity of this investigation, the complete research process has been documented, the interviews have been recorded and unbiased analysis of the data has been undertaken. The researcher has worked in hospitality for a long time, but she has excluded her beliefs and opinions in order to analyse the data objectively to show in the most liable way the insights and points of view expressed by the participants.

3.10 Ethical Considerations

Quinlan et al. (2019) described ethics as the action of reasoning with integrity, genuineness, and conducting the research safely. This means to identify the potential harms and risks that might appear as a consequence of the research and the approach taken when it was conducted (Quinlan et al. 2019). The investigator of this research can ensure that all the participants of this study chose voluntarily to take part in the study and signed a consent form before the interview, being informed of the purpose of the study and of all the possible risks and benefits involved in taking part in the investigation. There are risks involved in all research investigations, but this research is deemed to involve minimal risk.

All the interview questions were designed to not compromise the participants' loyalty to the employer. Additionally, they were informed they could stop the interview at any point with no consequences, or they could not answer some of the questions if they felt uncomfortable.

To preserve the participants' privacy, the names of the contributors were never shared in the study, nor discussed with the supervisor of this research. Moreover, they consented for the recordings and transcripts to be kept in a safe place in the researcher's house until the investigator has permission to destroy them. Every participant can request or access a copy of the study and their personal recordings and transcripts if desired.

3.11 Limitations

There are some possible limitations of the study under discussion. The first one is that the results of this study may not be generalisable to build theory because due to time constraints, the sample size is relatively small. The second possible limitation is that the qualitative research is very time-consuming so there may not be enough time to analyse all the data collected accurately. A third possible constraint is that due to Covid-19 restrictions, none of the participants has been able to meet in person, so even doing the interview online, the interaction is more limited than in other circumstances. The last limitation for this study is that some people did not want to participate in the research because they are still working for the company chosen to conduct the study, even if the research is not related to the organisation but with the hospitality sector in general.

3.12 Conclusion of the Methodology Chapter

This chapter identifies the research question, objectives, and philosophy of the study undertaken. Additionally, this section determines the strategy and methods used to carry out the primary research to answer the objectives. The chapter finalises considering the reliability and validity of the research, along with the ethical considerations and limitations. With the methodology identified, the next section will analyse the findings of the research.

Chapter 4 – Findings and Analysis

4.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to present and describe the findings of the primary research conducted by the researcher through the execution of semi-structured interviews. This investigation concentrates upon current or previous managers working in the hospitality sector, and their perceptions and insights regarding Emotional Intelligence and how it affects them in their daily lives. The findings are organised according to the major themes explored in the interviews through a thematic analysis.

Three relevant themes were derived from the evaluation of the data collected, as well as several sub-themes. The themes of the findings are arranged as follows:

- The impact of Emotional Intelligence on the hospitality sector.

- The role of Emotional Intelligence in managers' performance.

- Consequences of the lack of Emotional Intelligence in managers in the hospitality sector.

A copy of the interview sheet used to collect the primary data is available in **Appendix 2** and the full transcript of the interviews is accessible upon demand.

4.2 The Impact of Emotional Intelligence on the hospitality sector

Emotional intelligence, as mentioned in the literature review chapter, is an essential asset for companies to achieve competitive advantage in the hospitality industry (Seeler, 2019). Therefore, it is quite connected to employee satisfaction, excellent service, and retention of staff. Moreover, it affects managers' relationships with their subordinates and the lack of it has a psychological impact on the managers' mindset.

4.2.1   The Importance of a Good Team Management

The impact of Emotional Intelligence in hospitality for respondent 1: "*It's a healthier work and workable environment*" and as stated before, managers in the hospitality sector must provide a good service, but they also need to ensure the collaboration between their employees that crave to feel valued and supported by their employers and managers

(Čolović et al., 2021). Most of the respondents state that they have good relationships with their teams and all the participants agree that one of the primary responsibilities as managers is managing people and keep their staff satisfied because they are the ambassadors of the business.

"The primary role is to deal with people, you have to understand what is expected from the relation, what is expected in the process so you do have to see what happens for what person or for what kind of job and I guess [Emotional intelligence] impacts directly, who do you have to work with more friendly, more politely, more in a professional way, you kind of have to navigate through this, and If you have a good understanding of it helps you in that sense." (Respondent 7)

"Part of your job as a manager is to make sure that they are happy in their job, because if somebody is not happy in the work, they shouldn't be there. So, you want to try to make the environment as good as possible". (Respondent 2)

"I understand how important is to be careful when you deal with people nowadays. I take I breathe before taking a decision, mainly when emotional decisions are involved." (Respondent 3)

However, some of them consider they do not have the necessary tools to manage some difficult situations with their staff. Therefore, leaders with low levels of Emotional Intelligence will lack the ability to manage, motivate, and lead their team members to perform to their best levels.

"I had one or two instances in the last few weeks where I realised staff members were kind of taking advantage of how I was trying to make everybody feel comfortable and I got a little bit not annoyed but frustrated. So, I didn't have the tools to speak to him about it in a right way, so I just haven't spoken up to them about it. I'm hoping that it resolves itself." (Respondent 6)

Respondent 4 states that if she had more Emotional Intelligence would deal with difficult situations with their team differently: "*I wouldn't let things affect me when they say things. I think I would be more focused or more confident to say things the way I want as well sometimes when they do something wrong, I go around and I'm not straight […] Sometimes it affects me because I don't know how they are going to answer.*"

4.2.2 Psychological Impact

One of the main findings of this dissertation is that most of the participants felt prepared to be a manager, but along the way, they realised they did not have the tools to cope with the different setbacks that they found. As Langhorn (2004) stated, the levels of Emotional Intelligence of employees in hospitality are related to company performance. Hence, the managers must work on their Emotional Intelligence competencies to cope with the daily challenges that can appear in such a busy environment.

"I think that people should realise more how important is this [Emotional Intelligence] and give the managers ways of coping with the things that we go through, which I don't think was ever addressed. I think if you're going to have someone managing people, they need to have some kind of training about how to treat the customers, how to treat people, and how to deal with conflict as well. And I think people dismiss that a lot and they don't give the importance that they should." (Respondent 10)

Some respondents felt stressed and overworked due to psychological exhaustion given the fact that they did not get the proper training to deal with difficult situations with customers and staff, and some of them were doubting their abilities to deal with problems properly to be effective.

"They could give us some psychological help because usually, they train us for the daily stuff, but they don't train us when something really bad happens they just say you shouldn't be on the same level or involved, don't worry. This is tiny, small, but they're not there every day dealing with this gossip or dealing with people complaining all the time. So, I feel we should have training and get some psychological support." (Respondent 4)

"One thing that I always question my boss is that as a manager we never had a proper training to be leaders even though some people are just born with leadership, but I think we should be prepared, get some training, from professional HR, psychologist or someone that has knowledge, expertise in this area cause I don't have it, and I could be wrong, I could make wrong decisions." (Respondent 5)

4.3 The Role of Emotional Intelligence in Managers' Performance

The perspectives of the managers in this research show that they have improved their Emotional Intelligence since they became managers, learning through experiences and by

mistakes. They think that by being more self-aware, regulating their own impulses, and being more empathetic towards their subordinates they will get successful outcomes for their performance and the organisation's performance, but they still feel they have a long way to go in order to get the desired levels of Emotional Intelligence to deal with conflict in a more meaningful way and not letting things affect them so much in a daily basis.

"You are able to work doing your best, but as well making sure that you can bring your inner game when you are working you can control your emotions. Because you are going through some things that may be not the best things to go through especially when you are working with other people." (Respondent 9)

"Emotional Intelligence is having a little bit of empathy with your staff and control their emotions and your emotions in stressful situations." (Respondent 2)

"I try to work on my empathy, so I'm trying to understand your problems so now I'm going to explain mine so together we can maybe find a solution that fits everyone." (Respondent 3)

Respondent 6 believes that in some instances it can be a disadvantage to have high levels of Emotional intelligence and as a result, some employees will attempt to take advantage of the manager: *"Yes we can improve the environment and the way you talk to people, but it can also make you think too much about the personal aspect, you don't want to hurt people's feelings and then, it becomes too personal. It needs to be like a fine line between work and emotion. Yes, I want them to feel comfortable. Yes, I want them to feel good, but are they taking advantage of me trying to make them feel that way?."*

4.3.1 Understanding the Needs of Their Subordinates

As stated in the literature review, the leaders are in charge to accomplish the goals of the organisations (Kotter, 2001). For this reason, they need to understand that every employee has unique qualities that make them special in the workplace (Buckingham, 2005). Moreover, they need to be aware of their employees' needs to make them perform well and be more productive (Rodriguez and Walters, 2017). The experiences lived by this specific group of managers suggest that all of them are conscious of this fact, and they attempt to think about their subordinates' needs as much as possible, although it is not always possible.

"That's one of the main points of being a manager, everybody has a different approach, and everybody has a different way to deal and behave, how to appeal to that specific person because some of them you have to always to listen to them and say why? Very hard is someone doing something without a reason behind. The reason can be wrong but at least they have a reason of why? so you have to understand that the easiest way is trying to see through their eyes." (Respondent 7)

"You need to understand people, how to create a great environment, people have different behaviours and then you have to manage that. You have to understand people's behaviours and then try to be fair with everyone." (Respondent 5)

"I don't need to be their friends, but when it happens it's amazing because you know people. I feel more comfortable saying things to them, like the way I want rather than when I'm just their boss and I don't know anything about them. I always try to be professional, I always try to give like great rosters and stuff because I want people to enjoy their lives." (Respondent 4)

Respondent 2 believes that perhaps a few years ago the situation was different and managers would deal with their teams in a more authoritarian manner, but nowadays, as the world has progressed they need to consider their needs otherwise their teams will not respect them.

" I don't think your team will respect you as much if you are a little bit detached from them and not understanding of their own things and have a little bit of respect for them, because if just sort of went and ruled with an iron fist, I don't think is a good idea, especially today, maybe 10 or 20 years ago that was sort of probably more the way people went especially in hospitality [...] but I think as the world is evolving you need to have a little bit of a softer touch and I think that Emotional Intelligence is a key part of that." (Respondent 2)

4.3.2 Conflict Management

It has been previously discussed how conflict management seeks to increase organisational performance (Nash and Hann, 2020) and emotions always appear when there is a conflict in an organisation, as well as it has negative connotations for everybody, decreasing productivity, performance, and motivation among employees (Jehn, 1997).

Respondent 6 states that *"that kind of environment is very emotional. High emotions. We work together all the time. It can become really personal."* Therefore, it is necessary for managers to manage conflict appropriately to get successful outcomes. Most of the managers agree on the fact that they always attempt to find the best solution for their team and the organisation when there is a conflict between two or more people, and most of them have similar ways to deal with conflict, but on some occasions, they feel they do not have the experience needed to deal with it appropriately.

"You have to manage your own reactions towards everyone else's expected reaction. So, you don't react at all, calm things down and understand what is happening, and where is that conflict coming from? Process that information and listen to both parts of the story and see the best route you can take." (Respondent 1)

"I'm pretty heads on person, so if there was a conflict, I would talk to each both of them separately. You kind of have to realise that stories can be mixed around, that people have different opinions on what happened. Talk to them together, see if there is a way it can be resolved and you kind of have to not put blame on anyone. It is just kind of like sit down: can you work together if you can't what has to be done? But if it's work-related: how can it not happen again?." (Respondent 6)

Respondent 9 argues that *"When you are addressing a conflict, if you are not well able to understand the situation, you might end up addressing the situation in a wrong way without really going through what happened" (Respondent 9).* For this reason, on some occasions some of them felt they do not have the experience, or the tools needed to deal with it appropriately:

"When I started as a manager in Bunsen I had never worked as a manager before in any sector, so for me was the first time and I missed to understand so many situations at the beginning. So, there were several situations that if I had the knowledge, I would have controlled them better." (Respondent 8)

"I think sometimes I forget that people don't react in the same way that I do in situations […]. It's not something that ever was talked about. People know how to do that, or they don't is a skill that is not developed by a lot of places or like talked by a lot of places when you become manager that it is mentioned. Really is trying to learn on the job if that

happens. What do you do? You have to get tools. I don't have the tools. What I personally think is a good way to manage people could be completely wrong.'' (Respondent 6)

4.3.3 Desired Performance

Most managers in this specific company argue that their performance is good enough, but some of them feel if they increased their levels of Emotional Intelligence, they would improve their performance in some ways and that would help them to deal with difficult situations differently.

"I definitely think it would make my life easier to deal with that, less stressful and make people happier, even though I still believe I do a great job like managing people, leading people but we can always improve, and I think Emotional Intelligence it is a great help for that matter." (Respondent 5)

"I think the ways would improve is the way people see me, my bosses they would see me more confident and more professional and sometimes they would let me take my steps. They would let me do whatever I want in a sense they wouldn't question me sometimes: She's not someone who is going to freak out. And sometimes I feel they feel I am just going to storm out." (Respondent 4)

"Maybe not letting other people's problems affect me so much. Especially during the pandemic was very hard because even like no one was feeling good and some of my staff team, they will come to work feeling very bad and then I'll feel bad to ask them to work. So maybe I should have separated more the moment that I give them emotional support and the moment that I tell them: I need you to do this because it's our job and it needs to be done. So especially last year it was very difficult for me emotionally to be able to manage them." (Respondent 10)

4.4 Consequences of Lack of Emotional Intelligence in Managers in the hospitality sector.

In the literature chapter has been claimed that Emotional Intelligence is connected to the retention of staff and job satisfaction (Jehn, 1997). The quality of relationships in the workplace can directly affect the wellbeing of individuals (CIPD, 2021). Effective leaders will increase engagement from their employees (Jafri et al., 2016). On the other hand, leaders with low Emotional Intelligence will lack the skill to manage and lead their teams

to operate at maximum levels. The participants in this research have appointed several consequences that can take place when there is a disconnection between managers and employees.

4.4.1 Low Morale and Toxic Environment

Most of the participants coincide in the idea that one of the main consequences of the lack of Emotional Intelligence in managers in hospitality will be creating a toxic environment in the restaurants and will lower the morale of the team, driving the manager away from the employees and bringing a cycle of frustration where they will be very unhappy.

"If you have a manager that doesn't really understand about Emotional Intelligence and it's very reactive and it doesn't process before any decision, you can see the morale of the team goes low, people leave the job. People get very unhappy. It becomes actually quite toxic." (Respondent 1)

"People start fighting and you can see when the managers don't have [Emotional Intelligence], it becomes a toxic environment, it becomes a problematic place. You see in some places, political fights, people try to stab each other in the back, to actual screaming. It becomes a really big problem on the long ground if the manager or even the team is not capable of organising themselves." (Respondent 7)

4.4.2 Stress and Anxiety

Managers need to find a balance between their job and their personal lives, and it can be detrimental for the company when a manager does not know how to separate both. For that matter, respondent 9 has stated that *"if you don't have the balance between working and living you won't be able to focus and be productive, especially if you are a leader."*

Respondent 10 discusses the anxiety she felt sometimes before going to work to the point she was doubting about her skills to perform her work properly: *"I had anxiety sometimes before going to work. I just felt overwhelmed because from the top they want results and me saying, but how do I do this? I feel like: am I doing a good job? Am I doing a bad job?."*

Another consequence that can arise due to the fact of not having enough Emotional Intelligence to deal with difficult situations is feeling fatigued because of all the

responsibilities they have, as respondent 4 declared: *"The first one [consequence] is having a breakdown, the second is bringing to your life all this stress and being overwhelmed all the time, also maybe not have patience with staff"*

4.4.3 Labour Turnover

Most of the participants in this research recognised that one of the principal consequences of not having a manager with Emotional Intelligence is employee turnover, then companies will have to invest more time and effort in training new staff and start from the beginning

"Staff turnover, I think they wouldn't keep staff. As the manager is very important to build the team, so if you have a manager that doesn't know how to deal with people, they are going to keep quitting. You are never going to have a static team." (Respondent 10)

"If you don't have enough experience as a manager you come across with some problems and the consequences are going to be what happened to me: people leaving the restaurant, people unhappy, people complaining, and people chatting on your back. So, that's the consequence, it is a bad environment in a team and at the end, the team is going to be broken and you need to start from the beginning." (Respondent 8)

4.4.4 Bad Reputation for the Company

Some participants stated that lack of Emotional Intelligence in managers can be detrimental for organisations because customers can notice when there is a bad environment or employees do not feel satisfied in their jobs, and in the end, this will entail a bad reputation for businesses and a weakening of the employer brand.

"I think the lack of that would just make it like a bad environment for the team and overall, for their business." (Respondent 9)

"I think what can happen it's someone having like a storm out or teams being changing all the time like or the company having like a bad reputation because everybody knows what's happening there." (Respondent 4)

"There are so many consequences, in restaurants, it's all about atmosphere. The atmosphere in a team can be detrimental if you don't have emotional intelligence [...]

Especially if you are stressed at work, all the customers will notice, all the other staff will notice it. Everything you do, it will show through you if you don't want to be there. The company suffers a lot as a result of that. If you go to a restaurant and you can clearly see that the person serving you in the does not want to be there, you automatically equate that to the business is not a good business. The owners are not good, the managers aren't good, they don't know what they're doing, they don't know how to keep their staff happy, so the company, in general, suffers a lot." (Respondent 6)

4.5 Conclusion of the Findings Chapter

These findings offer a substantial understanding of how Emotional Intelligence affects managers in hospitality in their day-to-day routine. The results demonstrate the importance of Emotional Intelligence in the hospitality sector, the role that Emotional Intelligence plays in managers' performance, and how the lack of Emotional Intelligence in managers can be detrimental to the organisation. With the findings identified and related to the literature review, the next chapter will discuss them and will indicate several implications, limitations, and recommendations.

Chapter 5- Discussion

5.1 Introduction

After analysing the findings identified in the previous section, the purpose of this chapter is to interpret and examine the relevance of the findings within the framework of the literature review. In addition, this section will indicate some implications and limitations of this study and will determine recommendations for future research.

5.2 Summary of the Findings

The aim of this research was to contribute meaningful insights towards the impact of managers' emotional intelligence on dealing with difficult situations in the hospitality sector. The findings suggest that Emotional Intelligence helps managers to take better decisions regarding their teams and serve them to find better ways to cope with the daily tasks that are assigned to them.

To answer the research question, four objectives were appointed, and they will be critically evaluated and connected to the findings and the literature review in the next section.

5.3 Discussion

5.3.1 Objective One -To Explore the Benefits of Emotional Intelligence in Conflict Management.

The results in this research for the first objective suggest that two clear benefits of Emotional Intelligence in conflict management: they are good team management and a better way to address the conflicts when they arise. Most managers agree on the emotional environment they work on a daily basis, therefore proper conflict management skills are needed. They all believe that they manage conflict objectively and appropriately by being more self-aware and empathetic because they attempt to understand where the conflict is coming from and see every person involved in the conflict's point of view before taking any difficult decisions to resolve the conflict. For these reasons, addressing conflict effectively is crucial for them, but some participants feel sometimes they do not have the tools needed to address the conflict adequately going through what really happened or dealing with the difficult situation. All of this implies that if they increased their levels of

Emotional Intelligence, they would deal with conflict and difficult situations in a more meaningful way and would find better remedies to all the obstacles and setbacks that are presented in their daily work. This supports the argument by Daniel Goleman (2000) that proclaimed that employees with more levels of Emotional Intelligence have the ability to overcome conflicts in a more efficient way than employees with lower levels.

After analysing all the results, it can be concluded that when the Emotional levels in managers are higher, they are able to address and resolve conflicts more effectively because they use the competencies gained such as self-awareness, empathy, and social skills to deal with their teams and teach them how to cooperate and even reflecting some of their own Emotional Intelligence into their teams.

5.3.2 Objective Two - To determine in Which Ways Emotional Intelligence Improves Relationships Between Employees and Managers.

The second objective is to evaluate how Emotional Intelligence can enhance relationships between employees and managers. The results show that managers in this study are more self-aware and empathetic since they got promoted, and this is crucial for them to maintain a good relationship with their teams to ensure collaboration and provide an outstanding service. They believe they are the key to make the environment as healthier as possible to lead and manage their teams. Thereby, they must make an effort to understand that every employee is different and has different approaches and behaviours at work and they need to be fair with everybody. These results imply that, in the hospitality sector, the most important issue is the atmosphere, and managers need to create a pleasant environment because customers can notice when employees are not satisfied. Additionally, the results entail that all managers have increased their Emotional Intelligence competencies since they became managers through experiences and mistakes.

The results verify what Jain (2008) discussed, that is Emotional Intelligence promotes a healthier environment with better relationships because people with more Emotional Intelligence have the competency to empathise with others' emotions. Similarly, it underpins the idea argued by Yadav and Lata (2019), where they argued that a good leader needs to understand their subordinates' needs and deal with their emotions, by spreading

positivity into the atmosphere and allowing empathy and trust to arise, and then, the employees will become more productive and feel more valued.

As a result, it can be assumed that Emotional intelligence is crucial in those leaders, considering they are the key for the company to achieve the goals of the organisation and they have the duty to motivate their subordinates to utilise and capitalise on their talent at optimal levels. On the contrary, leaders with low levels of Emotional Intelligence will lack the ability to manage, motivate, and lead their team members, and the productivity and performance of the company will drop.

5.3.3 Objective Three - To Identify in Which Ways Emotional Intelligence Can Improve Managers' Performance.

The third objective is to determine how Emotional Intelligence can improve managers' performance. The results in this research indicate that most managers believe they lacked enough training to manage people when they were hired as managers. And as a result, some of them feel they do not have the necessary tools to deal with conflict effectively or in difficult situations, and they felt overworked, anxious, and overwhelmed, which had a bad psychological impact on them. A few managers appointed training, workshops, or even psychological help as a measure to make them feel more confident and as a help to be more successful in their jobs and improve their performance. This implies that most of the Emotional Intelligence they have at the moment, has been developed by learning through experiences and mistakes on the job, and if this was amended some of the difficult situations that they lived could have been avoided or handled in a more meaningful way. Therefore, employers could put more emphasis on training before the job starting date to improve managers' interpersonal skills and give them more confidence, even if it is impossible to prepare managers to deal with every situation that can arise. This information also entails that companies still focus on results instead of interpersonal skills and they tend to promote to senior positions people based on their performance as an individual, leaving behind the fact that social skills are essential in higher roles for managers to truly help the company gain competitive advantage.

As Doe et al. (2005) stated, people should be hired based on their Emotional Intelligence levels as much as their Intelligent quotient because if they do not know how to manage people they are likely to not be successful in their jobs and they will leave or will be fired

after a short period. Moreover, it supports the argument by Seeler (2019) that argues that Emotional Intelligence is an essential asset for companies to achieve competitive advantage. Hence, it can be argued that managers that get training in Emotional Intelligence competencies before the starting date probably will become more confident to do their jobs successfully without feeling stressed and overwhelmed and to deal with the daily problems that can appear, resulting in a stronger performance.

5.3.4 Objective Four - To Determine the Consequences of Lack of Emotional intelligence in Managers.

The last objective is to identify the consequences of lack of Emotional Intelligence in managers. In this research, all the managers agreed on the fact that it can be detrimental for the organisation if the manager does not have Emotional Intelligence to manage people, and this will result in a toxic environment, labour turnover, and bad reputation for the organisation in the long run because customers notice when there is not a good environment. These declarations imply they are aware their positive performance is essential for the reputation and results of the business, and employers need to put more emphasis on training managers to deal with difficult situations.

This is supported by Goldstein (2014), who declared that Emotional Intelligence is connected to job satisfaction and retention of staff, and by Langhorn (2004), who declared the levels of Emotional Intelligence in employees are highly connected to company performance. In this sense, and after analysing the results, it can be confirmed that Emotional Intelligence is very needed in the hospitality sector to gain competitive advantage and to increase organisational performance.

5.5 Limitations

There are some limitations of the research to discuss. The first limitation is that the researcher has been working in the hospitality sector for several years and the research could be biased by her own experiences and perspectives. Another limitation is the geographical area, the participants of the research were selected based on their professional experiences and level of education rather than location, these results might or not represent the restaurants in other areas of Dublin, additional research would be necessary to determine that. Due to the world's current situation with the pandemic Covid-19, all interviews were conducted online through Microsoft teams. Some

participants were under time pressure, thus some of their answers may or may not lead to completely honest responses to the interview questions.

5.6 Recommendations for Future Research

In future studies, mixed-method research would be recommended in order to measure the levels of Emotional Intelligence of the participants in the research, and so they can contribute with more accurate information about the topic. In addition, a longitudinal study would be useful to determine how their perspectives can be modified over the years while their levels of Emotional Intelligence increase.

Further research should be done by increasing the sample group to other restaurants, and from bars and restaurants to other sectors within the hospitality sector to add more valuable information to assess if the results would be replicated in a larger research project.

5.7 Conclusion of the Discussion chapter

This chapter examines the findings outlined in the previous section. On balance, the comparison of the results reflects the importance and benefits of Emotional Intelligence in the hospitality sector and their managers to improve organisational performance, by enhancing relationships between managers and employees and managing conflict more effectively. The next chapter will provide a synopsis of the results, underlining their value and relevance.

Chapter 6 – Conclusion

6.1 Conclusion

The present research examined how Emotional Intelligence can affect managers' relationships with their teams, their own performance, and in overall, the organisational performance. The researcher aimed to contribute meaningful insights towards the impact of managers' emotional intelligence on dealing with difficult situations in the hospitality sector. This study has found that even when managers developed some Emotional Intelligence on the job by experiences and mistakes, it would be helpful to develop some of the Emotional Intelligence competencies by getting some training or psychological help.

The first aim of this research was to explore the benefits of Emotional Intelligence in conflict management. This study has found that the two major benefits are good team management and an appropriate way to address conflicts when they appear. Emotional Intelligence leads to better results when leading with people because when managers can be self-aware and have self-management competencies, this means they can control their impulses and their reactions. Therefore, they learn how to communicate in a more assertive way rather than aggressively, understanding where the conflicts are coming from, and being empathetic by seeing everybody's point of view before taking any hard decisions to resolve the conflict.

Another aim of the research was to assess how Emotional Intelligence can strengthen relationships between employees and managers. In hospitality, the environment is really important for the company and managers to have successful outcomes. For managers to be successful in providing an outstanding service they need to be leaders and influence their teams to get the best out of them, this only can be done by maintaining good relationships with them and spreading positivity into the environment to have fun, and making it enjoyable while working. Managers need to take care of the needs of their employees apart from themselves and understand that every person can contribute to the company in a different and unique way. Managers that are self-aware, empathetic, and have self-motivation to stay positive in unpleasant times will be better at conveying this feeling to their teams to keep improving in their jobs and make them feel appreciated and valued.

The third aim of the study was to identify in which ways Emotional Intelligence could improve managers' performance. When managers in hospitality have good levels of Emotional Intelligence, they can balance their lives in a more satisfactory way, therefore, they will feel less exhausted, stressed, and overwhelmed because they will not take things personally and when they are not working, they will not be thinking about work-related issues. This implies also when they are at work, they will be able to focus more and giving their best on the tasks assigned to them, improving their performance. As a result, Emotional Intelligence has a positive psychological impact on managers because they can gain a better discernment about having to create a work-life balance for them.

Furthermore, this study determined the consequences of lack of Emotional Intelligence in managers in hospitality. As it has been said before, in the hospitality sector, everything revolves around the atmosphere. If the atmosphere is not healthy, this can be detrimental to the business. When a manager does not have Emotional Intelligence, it can lead to a negative environment, labour turnover, and a poor reputation for the organisation. The disconnection between managers and their staff is one of the principal causes for people to leave companies in hospitality, and one reason that this happens is that managers do not possess the Emotional Intelligence required to deal with people and difficult situations. Owners of restaurants and the culture of organisations must promote a healthy environment where only good manners are allowed to deal with people. Implementing additional measures like appraisals, performance reviews, and meetings to catch up with their teams is essential to create a suitable environment and establish a system where communication flows to look continuously for new ways to improve the organisational performance. It can be said that Emotional Intelligence is much about self-reflection, but companies can invest and help managers to develop some of the competencies in order to be more successful in their jobs dealing with people and taking difficult decisions. Hence, finding new strategies to cope with the daily challenges that can appear in such a busy environment.

In conclusion, with some time, effort, energy, and investment into training, employers will take care of their managers, then managers will value their employees, and employees will provide the best service.

6.2 Recommendations, Implications, and Implementation Plan

The following recommendations are made based on the researcher findings:

1. Employers looking to have an excellent reputation must attempt to develop managers' interpersonal skills by providing training prior to the starting date of the role as manager, especially about how to be more emotionally intelligent towards their subordinates.

2. The culture of organisations must promote Emotional Intelligence from the top leading by example so employees can acquire or assimilate a better way to act and treat coworkers, and must penalise when an employee does not behave in a positive manner.

3. Managers can attempt to learn by themselves some of the Emotional Intelligence competencies by reading and some self-reflection, just as a way to be more successful.

4. Appraisals and performance review systems should be implemented in the hospitality sector to improve the channels of communication between managers and employees to find new ways to enhance organisational performance.

6.3 Personal Learning Statement

Conducting this research has been one of the most challenging academic accomplishments that I have done so far. I have gained valuable knowledge about how to conduct research in general, but especially about how to undertake a methodology chapter, which seemed quite difficult at the beginning. I also enjoyed the interview process where I took the time to know more in-depth the participants of the study and, given the topic, it was really entertaining to find out what they thought about it. The conclusion I draw from doing the research is that sometimes when starting a journey, you do not have to look at the bigger picture but at all the small steps that need to be done in order to achieve a serious goal, it makes the tasks more enjoyable.

I chose this topic because I have been working in the hospitality sector for more than 12 years. I had never listened about Emotional Intelligence until recently and it is a really passionate subject. I have realised that by being more aware of our own emotions and being able to manage them positively in relation to our coworkers, the experience of working with people can be challenging but also beautiful. People that are emotionally intelligent tend to get more successful outcomes than people that are reactive and explosive towards their environment. It is really difficult to control ourselves in some difficult situations, but if we learn to do that, the satisfaction of an appropriate reaction is just great.

Coming from Spain, I feel that studying in a foreign language has been really demanding but at the same time amazing, because every day in class I felt acquired new knowledge not only in the Human Resource Management field but in my understanding of the English language.

Lastly, this year with the Covid-19 pandemic, it has been really hard for everybody to keep the motivation and happiness at acceptable levels, especially for people who have lost a family member or friend. In my own experience, being away from my family and my country for such a long period has been difficult, but I have learnt how to be more resilient, and every minute of the time past has been worth it. I do not regret all the things I have learnt through this tough period.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 - Consent form

Title of the study: *The impact of managers' emotional intelligence on dealing with difficult situations in the hospitality sector.*

Researcher: Guadalupe López.

Contact number: +353899795242

Email: x20138873@student.ncirl.ie

I would like you to invite you to take part in a research study. Please take your time to read all the information carefully and feel free to choose whether or not to take part in the research.

My name is Guadalupe López and I am currently studying a MA in Human Resource Management at National College of Ireland.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to explore restaurant manager's experiences leading their team, their conflict management style and how emotional intelligence affects their relationship with their team, their performance and in overall, the organisation's performance.

Participants

You have been invited to take part in this study because your knowledge, professional experiences and individual opinion will contribute relevant and valuable insights to the research.

Procedure

The free participation in this study will consist of the following:

- You will participate in an interview that will comprise of 12 questions.
- It will take part in Microsoft Teams, and it will take 30min- 1hour duration.
- The questions will be open-ended, which means you can raise (present) any topics or concerns you find relevant or add any information you find useful for the investigation. The investigator may ask you to elaborate on your response.
- The interview process will take place at a day and time of your convenience at the end of July 2021.
- The interview will be recorded.
- If you choose to take part in the research, please feel free to decide not to answer any of the questions or to stop the interview at any time if you do not feel comfortable.

Risks and benefits of participation

This investigation is deemed to involve very minimal risk. The person interviewed may not feel comfortable answering some questions. The time spent on the interview may be another factor of concern for the interviewee.

The interview will be a valuable source to understand how emotional intelligence affects managers and their relationships with their teams.

Confidentiality

The interview will be recorded with your consent for the accuracy of the qualitative analysis of the data collected from our interview session. Also, with your approval, selected quotes from the transcription will be included, if necessary, in the final written dissertation to reinforce major points that appear from the interview. All information received from the participant will be kept confidential and in a secured place at the investigators' home office. Your responses will not be discussed with any of the other interviewees taking part in the study and your identity will not be discussed with either of the researcher's dissertation.

Information storage

Signed consent forms and original audio recordings will be stored in a secure location on a personal laptop until after the researcher's degree has been granted. A transcript of interviews in which all identifying information has been deleted will be preserved for a further two years after this. Under freedom of information legalisation, you are entitled to access the information you have provided at any time.

Results of the study

The results of this study will form a dissertation, which will be submitted to the National College of Ireland as part of the MA Human Resource Management programme.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the researcher.

Participant consent

I have read the above information and agree to participate in this study. A copy of this form has been given to me.

_____   _____

    Signature of Participant   Date

_____

    Participant Name (Please Print)

Appendix 2 - Interview Questions

1. How long have you been working as a manager?
2. What are the primary responsibilities of your role?
3. What does Emotional Intelligence mean to you?
4. How do you react when there is a conflict in your team? What steps would you take to manage the conflict?
5. How do you think Emotional Intelligence could improve your process to manage conflict?
6. What do you think the impact of Emotional Intelligence is on your job? *Do you think is important?*
7. Do you consider Emotional Intelligence could improve your job performance? In which ways? *Could you give me an example?*
8. How would you describe your relationship with your team?
9. In which ways do you consider that emotional intelligence could make these relationships better?
10. What do you consider employers can do to improve emotional intelligence levels within the hospitality sector?
11. How could you be more emotionally intelligent?
12. What are the consequences of the lack of Emotional Intelligence in the managers' performance in hospitality?